

# 2012-04-22 What Do We Bring Thats Extra

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

I feel a little bit apologetic that I don't have an Earth Day talk prepared. And it would have been nice.

So I'd like to do this in two parts today. One is to Oh, when I say Miss forgot so the one more announcement is that today's the last day for the online auction. And it's really also the last day of our kind of major fundraising for a retreat center. It's hard to imagine trying to fundraise anymore. appropriately. And the and now we're, you know, in the thick of their renovation of the place to be six months we'll have a retreat center. And we're kind of teetering financially on the edge of what we can do. And we keep kind of struggling or struggling or kind of trying hard to figure out what can we afford to do and we keep taking things out of the project, and then sneak things back in, take things out and, and, you know, so. So that's maybe as it should be, but we're still fundraising. And today is our last big day and where this auction, this wonderful auction, which represents the generosity of many, many people, all those things that people have come forward from this community and from all the way far far away who wanted to support this by offering something. It's a beautiful thing. And Michelle Aiden, who's there has It's been her gift to our community to put put a tremendous amount her husband tremendous amount of time and effort into organizing creating the auction. Thank you. And, and she's here with her laptop. Because if some of you want to participate in the auction but find that little bit difficult or challenging to navigate the website that has the online auction, that's what her laptops here for, she'll help you and help you find your way through it if you want to do that. Okay, so now the talk. So I want to do it in two parts. And first, I want to tell you a classic story from the ancient times from the Buddha's time. And then try to somehow apply that story or the key teaching of a story to our lives. The That the climax of the story is the Buddha teaching a particular verse four line verse, which became a very important verse in the history of Theravada Buddhism, sometimes it's used almost as a, as an encapsulation of the Buddhist teaching. And in the ancient world, people would there still there inscriptions that have been found to people put this verse on, on the inscriptions and maybe like, you know, the pursuit of life, life, liberty and happiness, or, you know, hold certain things in the American psyche. So this particular verse is very important. So the story has to do with the Buddha's chief disciple. His name is sorry, put the, the son of Sorry, sorry, this is the mother's mother's name. So, he had a very good friend who was also a One of the chief disciples of the Buddha named Mohammed Liana and they grew up in the same town. They were born around the same time and grew up being their Brahmins grew up together. And being Brahmins, they were given some of the best education that was available in India at the time. And so highly educated in you know, in all the things that they could you could be educated in back then including philosophy and religion, logic. And they, so they grew up together. And then at some point, there was a festival in their town, three day festival. And why I read the story is that they paid entrance fee the first day and participate in the festival with great delight. laughing with all the funny things and doing festival things. And so they decided to go back the next day. And so they paid their tickets for the next day and participated as well or laughed and enjoyed it.

And they went back the third day. And the third day they were sitting kind of watching the festival. And they, they reflected these two friends about you know, kind of seeing people doing party things. Maybe you've been on the outside of a party wondering what are they doing? Sometimes I don't know exactly how that but they're sitting kind of watching the whole thing. And they had this reflection that in 100 years, all this will be gone.

And somehow the contrast of 100 years from now and how temporary this particular festival is, the partying, whatever it was, give a very different context for wanting to participate in it. And they had a sense there must be something different, some other possibility in life than just partying. And so they. And so in India at that time, they already had this idea of liberation of freedom and liberation freedom sometimes was associated what was what is called the deathless. And it might also be translated as immortality. And so they vowed that they would go off and discover liberation, that that was more important in the context of this life that they were living then what they were doing in the festival. And so they went off and studied with one of the great teachers of the area and very quickly mastered his teachings. And he the master them so well that he wanted to make them teachers. And they said to him, is this the extent of your teachings, this as far as it goes? And he said, yeah, this is as far as it goes. And they said, well, it's not not enough. No we're not liberated we got free here yet. And so the tube to friends sorry put on Mohammed Liana made a promise to each other, that they would go off traveling around India visiting spiritual religious teachers of all kinds try to find the truth is trying to find liberation. And whoever found the deathless first would come and tell the other one and so they did for a long time.

And they were meant is that they were engaged in very sophisticated culture of exploring what it means to be alive. What are the options what were what our spiritual practices How does one practice what is practice lead to what does it entail? what's what's the what what responsibilities individual have, what can individual do what's, what depends on the gods, what's printed tournament What is it all these big questions that Indians were engaged in that time. And in all their exploration, they didn't find liberation. So they went back to their, I think their hometown, or close to it. And it was soon after the Buddha was awakened. I didn't run into the Buddha, but one of the first disciples of the Buddha early on was sent out to go teach, and, sorry, put up, ran into him. And he was so impressed by first study that how calm and peaceful this man was in radiant, he was in never seen someone with this kind of radiance. And, and he was a monk clearly so that meant he was a spiritual person, practitioner. And so I put I said, Well, you know, what practice Do you do and who is your teacher? And what is the doctrine of your teacher? This Buddhist monk said, Well, I'm just new to this. I'm a new student practitioner follower of the Buddha. So I can't really explain so well. And sorry, Buddha said, we should try me. You know, it's my responsibility to teach me what you know, teach me the essence of it. And it's my responsibility to figure out how to apply it to what it means. And that's a kind of a beautiful thing that they did that it's your responsibility to somehow take it in and receive it and work with it and, and not just wait until it's hand delivered. So, this monk, then recited this verse, and this is the verse and we don't know if it comes from the Buddha himself, which which I said at the beginning of the talk, but it came from this, this certainly from this disciple of the Buddha, and this verse is what became often repeated. And translation I have this versus have those things Have a cause. The Buddha teaches the cause and their cessation of those things that have a cause the Buddha teaches their cause and their cessation, how they come to an end. This is the teachings of the Buddha. So, most people are going to be perplexed. Why was this so important? But sorry Buddha got it. He got hidden you hear that? When you when you heard those teachings, they were enough to catalyze in his mind, his liberation, and for the first time he experienced a taste of liberation or the deathless. And so because of that, he was going to fulfill his promise and he went and found his friend Mohammed Liana and he recited those verses diversity him as well. Mowgli on that got it right away, too. And then they both went to see the Buddha. And

immediately the Buddha got a sense these people are special. And he kind of immediately kind of made them these kind of Chief disciples. They weren't fully awakened yet. And so they practice with the Buddha for a while until they got the full awakening. So what is it about this, this teaching this very brief teaching, that is so powerful, so significant that someone who's well trained, well reflected understands these things, could use those teachings to somehow get released, be liberated, that things of those things which have a cause, the Buddha teaches their cause, and their cessation? So one of the implications of this is that there are things that have a cause those things that have a cause the cause and conditions bring them about are not inherent. They don't have inherent permanence. Maybe they have no inherent value. But certainly have no inherent permanence status. And so because they're not inherent or intrinsic to this life, if we understand the cause, and more than just understand it would maybe end the cause, remove the cause, then the, that thing will no longer be there. So, it's not particularly interesting as a universal, maybe as a universal principle. But if you understand where it's how to apply it in particular areas of your life, it's very significant.

So if you have a thorn in your foot, and the foot hurts as you walk, and you assume, well, it's intrinsic to human life, that I'm supposed to have a thorn in my foot. It's predetermined down through the ages. The gods wanted me to have a thorn. It's my karma to have authority and I'm supposed to just bear it. There's all kinds of philosophies and teachings you can have about, just leave it in there. Or you can understand that. Yeah, you can. Yeah, please, I'm a little bit allergic to. So we moved the cause.

So if so if you understand that that pain in your foot comes from a thorn, and you understand that's the cause and you understand that the that, you that there's a cessation, there's an end to that pain by pulling the thorn out, then you can feel have some confidence. You can have even some delight. You can have a sense of relief and maybe a sense of even freedom in your mind, just knowing that this is possible. Finally going on with the store and my foot for years. And wow, I didn't know that I could take it out. This is great. So We carry thorns in our minds in our hearts. And in some of those stores have been people carry with them for a lifetime. And if you understand that the thorns, the pain, the suffering, the despair, the sadness, the regrets, the resentment, the clinging that we have, are there for a cause of a cause. And it's possible to end that cause then it offers a lot of hope in this life is the good news. If you're suffering is inherent to life, you're required to have it because it's pre determined, it's the way human condition has been set up. If you think that, that, you know, it's from the gods and you have to kind of pray to the gods and hopefully they'll do something good for you. Or there's nothing you can do except maybe hope that in the next lifetime, things will be better. Then there's all kinds of reasons why people just kind of feel like they're stuck. Or sometimes people are stuck because they simply can't see Cause we'll see what the thorn is. But if you can understand well the cause and feel some sense of agency ability to do something about the cause, then perhaps our suffering and despair can come to an end. And so, this is, I think, this is what Sariputra understood, and he immediately understood his role, what he could do. Whereas, perhaps in all this traveling in India, no one had really pointed to the idea of a cause that was particular that he has some agency or control or control and tried to have an agency or some role to address. In a sense, modern terminology, we could say that there was a psychological understanding, understood the psychology of suffering, and understood how the psychology of suffering comes into be much of what we carry with our psychological is not inherent, but rather you know comes together with a conditioning and beliefs and, and reactions that we have. So an interesting exercise I think, to kind of maybe one way of applying this or looking at this is to see what happens when you meditate and to consider what you bring with you when you meditate. That's not inherent to that period of time that you're meditating. So, you know, you've set you set aside a period of time here at IMC Sunday morning, it's 35 minutes to meditate. It's not inherent that you have to think about the auction. How am I going to, you know, what am I going to bid on the auction and it's the last day You know, I really want that thing and what's a good you know, you don't have to think about that.

It's not inherent to this. Or you don't have to think about your taxes anymore. Maybe even if you still haven't paid, you know, submitted your taxes, you don't have to, you know, you don't, it's not inherent to the situation, you have to think about your taxes. There's a lot of things that are not inherent to what necessarily happens as they happen, but if you watch your mind, you can see how much you bring with you. You bring a lot along. And if you believe it's in here and you believe that's necessary, then you'll lock on to it or continue to perpetuate it. But if you see it's not necessary, does it change your relationship to it in some way? And what change might that be? So, for example, when I was relatively new meditator, I brought a lot of things with me about meditation itself. One was that I've meditated in my first years of practice at the Zen center where you meditate together, meditate with your eyes open. So it kind of were the people around you more than maybe here, I don't know. And one of the things I brought with me was I had to meditate in order to look really good in their eyes.

You know, and I had to meditate in such a way that my teachers would approve of me. So I'd be sitting there wondering what that was like and trying to do it. Or I was had brought this idea is that my meditation was a time to become a super spiritual person. I was going to be like the great star. And so you know, this kind of radiation of grandiosity came in was there, you know, sitting strength late into the night. Hopefully someone noticed

Or sometimes it was the other side because the pendulum will swing right is on, you know, I bring with me and I just come in and sit down to meditate and I bring with me, I don't know what I'm doing. I can't do this. This is too difficult. I'm a disgrace to Buddhism, all kinds of you know, you know, kind of self deprecating thoughts. I bring it with me. And the two kind of kind of came together as a pair. I think sometimes thinking how great I was thinking how terrible I was. It's, you know, it's just swinging back and forth. The pendulum swings. It's kind of exhausting. Is there an alternative to these kinds of kind of mediation to bring in this kind of idea with you? And then as I learned more about meditation practice, then I brought with me all these shoulds I'm supposed to get concentrated. I'm supposed to have a mind that doesn't wander off and is supposed to be filled. with compassion, I'm supposed to, I'm supposed to I'm supposed to do all these things. And I had this, you know, so then then I start judging myself. You know, because while I'm not getting concentrated, I'm not so compassionate. Or I would judge myself. You know, maybe the pendulum would swing and wow, I'm really concentrated today. Boy, this is really good. And then I would bring this judgment. So I would bring into the situation judgments about the situation. This is good, this is bad. I'm doing great. I'm doing terrible. Are these kinds of reactions thoughts? Are they inherent to the situation or are they brought into the situation? And I propose that they're all brought in, they're not inherent to the situation. And so what happens when we see them as not inherent to see them as something that arises because of causes that don't have to be there? Do we can we let go of them? Can we bring the cessation of them? Can we let them let them go? Can we drop them? And what does it like to be present without bringing anything into the situation? And I think for me, that was one of the great lessons of Buddhist meditation was learning what it's like to be alive, what it's like to be present, without bringing anything along with me without bringing anything to this to the experience. So, you know, sit, sit and meditate and the mind wanders, sit and meditate sometimes, and maybe I'm feel irritated that day, sit and meditate and I feel calm that day. Can I have those experience be there without bringing anything to them, adding anything to them? So, if I'm sitting there and feeling, I have a wandering mind, there's a simple recognition that this is a wandering mind. This is how it is. As if As opposed to Oh, no. Oh, I hope no one notices. Or this is bad or you know, I'm not doing this right. There's so many things to bring to pile on top, hot pile and pile and pile, all this stuff on top of it. But it's as possible just it's possible to have a wandering mind and not bring anything to that except the simple recognition. This is what's happening. And in that simple recognition, there's a there's some freedom there. There's some peace there. There's some. There's no pendulum that swings and that we're not caught in the experience and the reaction. And it's a hard

lesson to learn because especially meditation, there can be all these ideas that we have sometimes because you're listening to people like me too much. That maybe you're supposed to kind of be completely still and non wandering mind or something and, you know, there's some kind of stuff Standard in which you're measuring yourself against. I'm not matching that standard. Gil can sit there and not move for 35 minutes Wow. But I can't I feel like I need to move you know and you know, so therefore I am and we fill in something therefore I am meant for Boogie Woogie dancing. That's the way for me through spiritual path.

And the, but just just just to kind of see just to kind of see that something is happening inside of us desire to move wandering mind, irritation, calm subtleness and then learn the art, the ability to be very simple wish Let it be, don't bring anything to it. Or if you do bring something to it, to see it as some because it's causing condition that comes and sees if it's easy enough to let it cease to let it fall away. Sometimes it falls away by itself by just relaxing around it not making a big deal of it. making a big deal of anything in meditation is counterproductive. So if you have a wandering busy mind, making a big deal of it doesn't help the Suzuki Roshi said apparently one point Don't be bothered by your thinking. And that was when I heard that I thought that was that was really helpful for me because I was so bothered gotta do something was thinking mind and but don't be bothered I gave the Wednesday morning here at IMC last Wednesday I I gave the instruction is kind of an exercise to people for the meditation session to practice only letting go letting go of your thoughts just let go of thoughts just let go let go let go the only thing they do is let go and see Several people said, that didn't work. Because the more they tried to let go, the more their mind got busy and churned up and agitated. So even letting go can be, you know, you know, to bring too much. And so what am I not bringing anything at all. And so in, in the period of meditation is a very special unique time in a person's life, I think, because it's one of the, I hope we can see it as one of the very few times in life where it's completely clear that you don't have to do any of the conventional things that people need to do in their lives. You don't have to, you know, work out on your taxes. You don't have to solve all your problems. You don't have to become a good meditator. You don't have to defrost the freezer. You don't have to, you know, there's a lot of things A lot of shows a lot of things have been probably should happen in your life. But when you sit down to meditate, the idea is to put all that aside and then see, can you experience yourself once you like to experience yourself without bringing anything to the situation, any thoughts, any judgments, any ideas, any memories, any history? any expectations, any projections into the future? What's it like to become simpler and simpler that way to allow yourself become simpler? Part of that is to know that you can't just turn off what goes on we bring things there's all this habit momentum in our mind. And so part of that then is to learn how not to bring more to the bringing, how not to add on layers and layers on top, but rather to step back and say oh, here I am. Doing this again here or not even that here here what's happening Is I'm trying to get concentrated. This is what trying to get concentrated looks like if we step back and see kind of like your anthropologist from Mars. And you say, wow, I get to study I get to investigate research, what it's like for these human beings on the planet Earth, to have a mind that wants to get concentrated, or have a mind that's judging itself negatively. I'm a bad meditator. But it is interesting to step back enough. So you can kind of turn around and look at yourself and say, Wow, isn't this interesting? As opposed to fighting it or believing it or getting involved in it. And that movement of stepping back or stepping around or turning around looking back at it is can be part of this moving into becoming Simple Moving into not bringing anything anymore, to have the experience of being aware of whatever's happening? Even our reactivity and all the things we bring experience at the awareness, the Knowing that mindfulness can provide freedom. The mindfulness can provide space spaciousness, or clarity or openness or non kind of kind of overview of the situation in such a way that we are not caught by it anymore. So what do you bring?



And it's necessary to have it there. And can you bring it to an end, and just have very simple, just be simple. It's a long process for many people, even knowing this idea can be meaningful. So to begin to get a sense of this in meditation, and to begin having it you know, to think of it as a slow unfolding of learning how to do this. It's not like you can do it overnight. That's something else we bring. Now, I don't know how to do this. I'm supposed to sit down and Do it immediately snap my fingers just sit there and be simple. That's, that's more that's more bringing right? Any idea of how you should be, or supposed to be, or shouldn't be, or not supposed to be. But once you get it, begin, start getting a kind of a sense or a taste or feeling for what it's like, in meditation to be simple enough, bring more and step back and allow things to be. And because you know, in meditation, you don't have to bring anything, then you can begin bringing with you that sense that feeling that understanding into the rest of your life, outside of meditation. And outside of meditation, there's a lot of compelling things that have to be done. And so it's a bit harder in daily life to learn how to do this, but if you have a feel for it, you can begin have more wisdom about when to become simple and When to not be simple when to when, when you don't bring anything to situation. And when it's actually useful to bring in situation when you're supposed to think about things and even evaluate things, and when not to evaluate things, or you become wised to see, you see clearly Oh, now I'm evaluating. Someone's walking down the street. And you evaluate them in a particular way. And you see, oh, this is an evaluation. I know what it's like to bring something this is I'm bringing something here as opposed to assuming that my evaluation of the person is the truth. Most people can many people can go through life assuming that whatever they think is the way things are. But if you can watch and see how thinking arises, valuation judgments arise in the mind. You see your role that you bring to the situation, then you can put a question After the say, evaluating this person this way, I'm judging this person this way, I had a reaction to this person this way. Let me look more carefully. Let me see is this really the case to give the person a second chance to not be, you know, limited by your first reactions or response to who the person is. Or in many situations, you know, they situation is kind of for the purpose of talk, I'll say neutral, but what do we bring to it, and to become aware of what we bring to it. So, I don't know if this is the best example. But thinking about this theme this weekend, I thought, remember, I've written a lot of public transportation in my lifetime. And then I was remembering all the things that are brought with me when I was sitting there and the bus. So when I was a little kid, like six years old, taking the public bus to kindergarten by myself, the thing I was most concerned about was recognizing the stop to get off. And that's what I was focused on. And then when I was a teenager, I mostly mostly noticed the other girls. That was what stood out. And then at some point later in my life, I mostly noticed what people were reading. I was gonna like to read and stuff and look at that book. Or at some point, I just became interested in all the people there, the sociology of buses, what's going on. So as a more open right, not selecting one category. And lately, it's been there technologies.

What are they? What are they looking at? They're pushing buttons. And so I bring something bringing selection process. So to be aware that there's a selection process, but we're where we're bringing, you know, it's that's only, although selection processes is only a segment of what's happening in that situation. If we see that we're segmenting it and focusing a particular thing, that's what we bring, then we can then we have the ability to say to ask ourselves, is this the wisest thing to do at this time? Maybe it is, maybe it's or maybe it's an innocent and fun thing to do. Or maybe this is not the way I want to live my life. Maybe there's other ways other things to do. Maybe there are more useful ways. I've been on public buses and, and, and decided that the most beneficial thing for me to do was not to go along with my automatic selection process or whatever it was that particular era. But rather to sit there and see if I can generate loving kindness for the people around some sense of friendliness or openness and generosity to them. I thought that was really nice, it was very nice thing to do. So what do we bring? And is it possible to bring do not bring so much is it possible to be wise but we bring in we don't bring to have the experience of meditation, of shedding so much of the bringing to giving up not

being so involved with all the bringing all the doing all the shooting and shouldn't and have a radical simplicity of being maybe not in some abstract idea of what being radically simple is, but a radical simplicity in the simple act of being mindful recognition of knowing. Here, this is what it's like now. I find some relief. Some peace, some, some joy, some happiness, in that simplicity, just knowing this is how it is. This is how it is now to do that might seem

like it doesn't have much worth or value. But I'd like to suggest that it's, it's probably one of the most valuable things you can do. And will it's not, it doesn't make you a week kind of empty person in some negative way. But actually, it gives you a tremendous power over the situation. Because then you have a certain kind of power and control over yourself. And you have the ability then to enter into and choose much better what to do and how to respond than if you're an automatic pilot. Which is what happens when we bring a lot into the situation and live in that bringing so Those things that have a cause the Buddha teaches their cause and their cessation. So I hope that this idea of looking at what we bring into the situation somehow applies or, you know, touches on one aspect of this famous verse for you. And, and I hope that you learn to step back from all that you're bringing to the situation and learn the beautiful thing of beginning to open up to the situation of what's in Buddhism. Sometimes it's called beginner's mind or the not knowing mind. Probably more situations than you realize would be you'd benefit from entering into them without preconceived ideas, or preconceived agendas. And just showing up and looking around. What is that what's now what is this so I hope that your meditation practice teaches you shows you how to live without preconceived ideas, agendas, bias and shoulds insurance and then we'll see what happens next.